

ABOLISH THE PRISON



As it stands, the United States prison system is *unjust, ineffective, racist*, and it serves to *perpetuate systemic racism and capitalism*.

It must be abolished.

We have argued already as to why this system is so racist and in need of change, in our CP essays. These zines are going to focus on advocating for a better system to replace prisons with. Starting firstly:



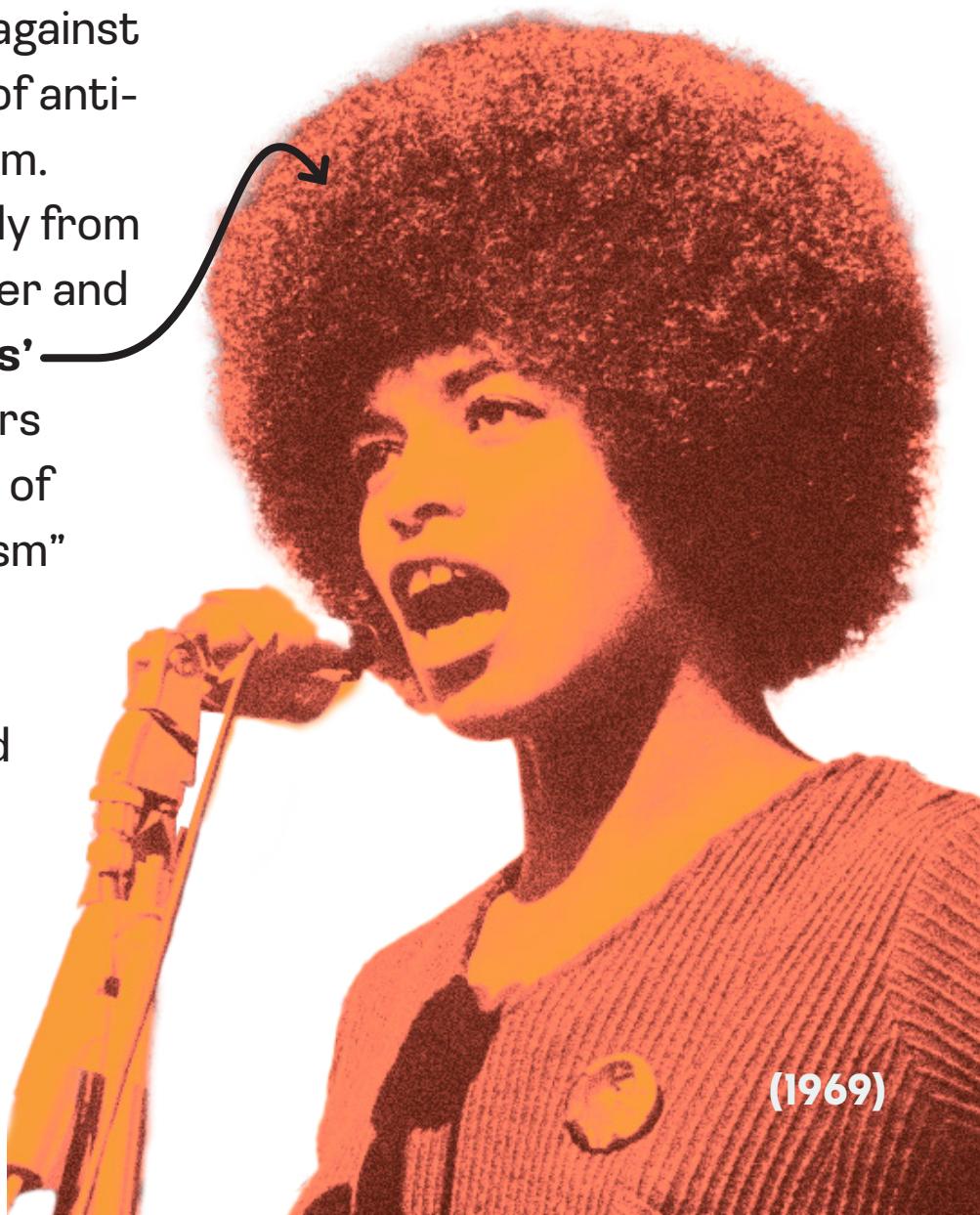
THE PRISON

It is important to be on the same page about definitions even as simple as what prisons are. In his CP essay, Fleischer has argued why the prison is

a system to remove individuals from society that do not behave with the status quo, which in America today is largely defined by capitalism and systemic racism

He describes how, contrary to the common belief that prisons are full of dangerous people, prisons actually serve as a place to hold people who go against the powerful systems of anti-blackness and capitalism.

Here he is pulling greatly from prison abolitionist writer and advocate **Angela Davis'** argument that prisoners are often the “detritus of contemporary capitalism” (16). Davis also argues that people in prison are not necessarily bad individuals, they are individuals who have been wronged by the system.

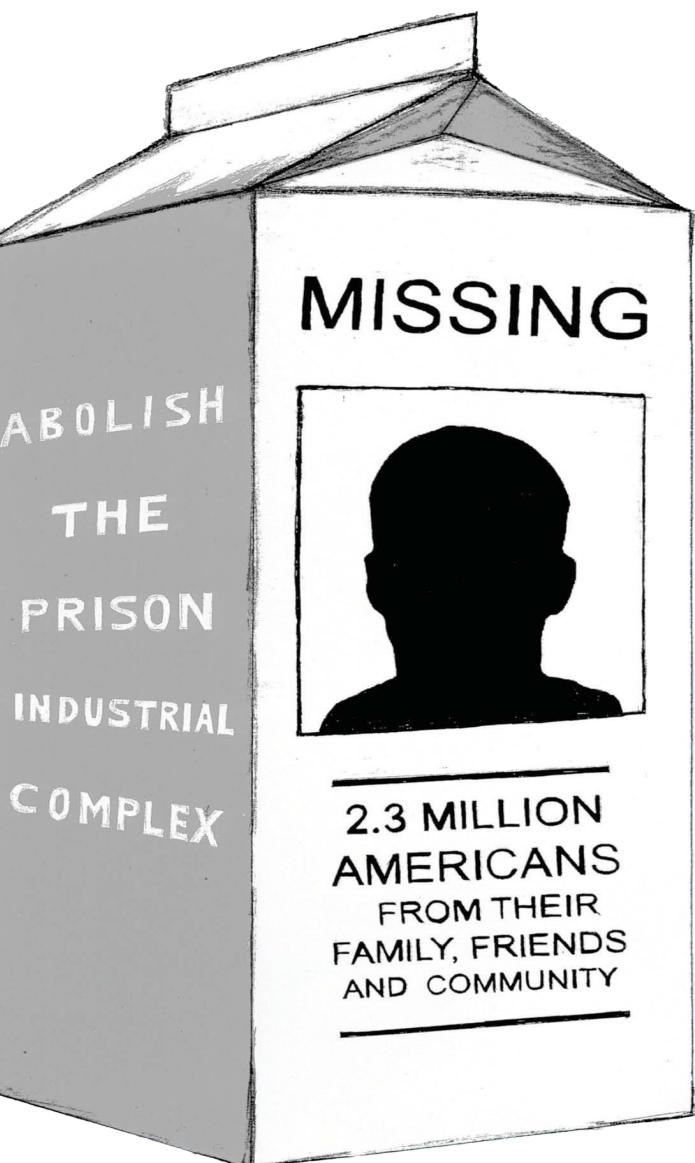


(1969)

ABOLITION

Abolition is a complex solution to the prison problem that is going to require a lot of time and effort to build new systems that can replace the prison. Davis describes that because the modern prison-industrial complex is so massive and serves many functions, declaring

[we must] let go of the desire to discover one single alternative system of punishment that would occupy the same footprint as the prison system (106).

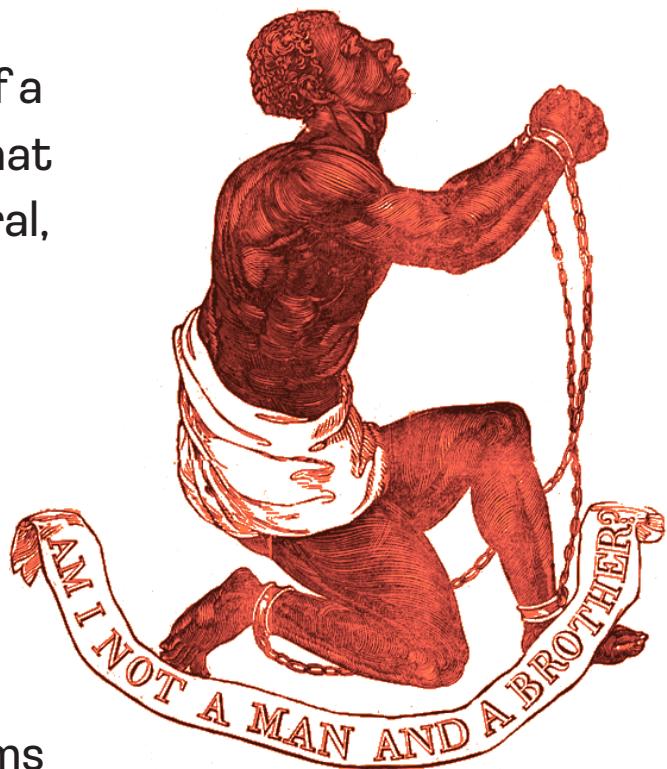


In the next zine, ***Replace the Prison***, we will discuss some concrete examples of alternative systems that could replace our prisons now. It is however important to keep in mind that while abolition is not about trying to take down prisons overnight, the purpose is indeed to definitively remove prisons entirely.

REFORM ?

Many people will argue that abolition sounds too extreme of a solution, perhaps contending that reforming prisons is more natural, politically effective, or safe.

But when one considers the historical systems of chattel slavery, sharecropping, convict leasing, and more that lead directly to the U.S. prison system today (Fleischer 3), it is clear now how these systems needed to be fully abolished rather than simply reformed. Focusing on prisons now, basic reforms such as lighter sentencing or abolishing the death penalty miss the greater point. Prisons are not wrong because their punishments are too harsh or unfair, the entire system is wrong.



Juvenile children bought to serve as farmers



Older activist movements such as the LGBT movements of the 1960's also supported abolishing police, prisons, capitalism, and more to achieve the freedom they needed. Queer and trans writers **Morgan Bassichis**, **Dean Spade**, and **Alexander Lee** describe how, somewhere along the line, the LGBT movement started working with these systems and only asking for small reforms (16). They also differentiate what solutions these new movements are pushing for from the more radical approaches, in a table briefly captured below.

These reformist movements often miss the greater

issues beyond just those that affect

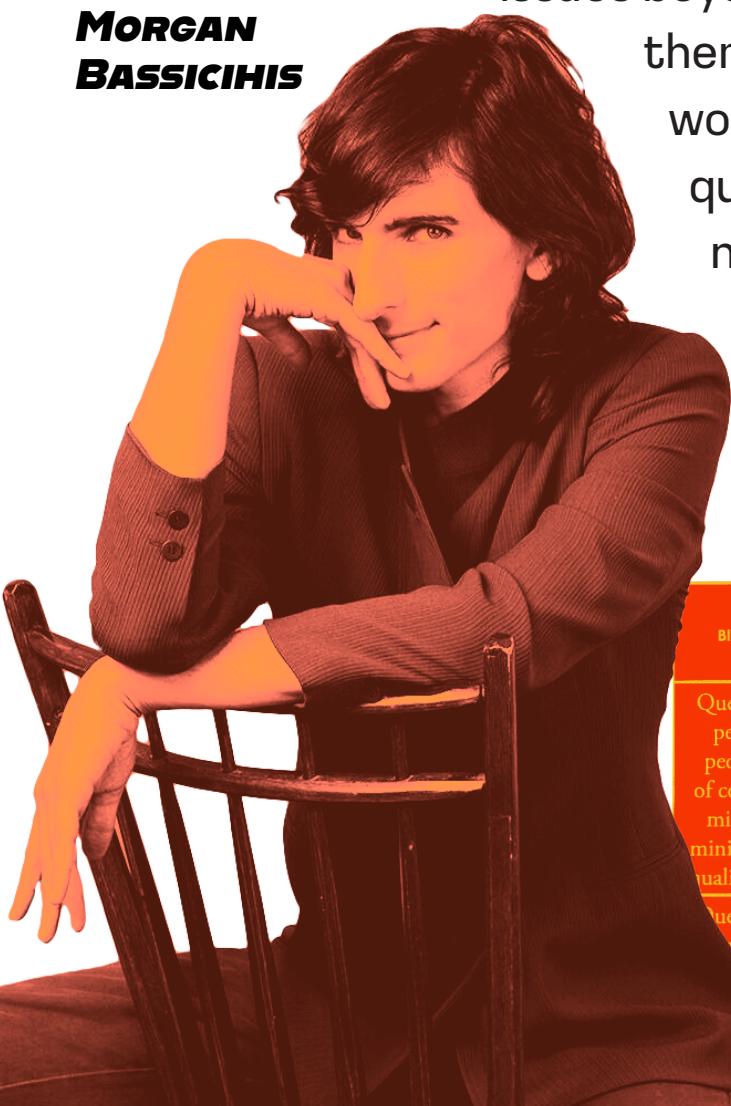
**MORGAN
BASSICHIIS**

themselves, like how prison abolition would greatly benefit trans and queer individuals. Prisoners who do not conform to the gender binary are exposed to higher rates of physical and emotional abuse from male prison guards relative to the other prisoners (Girshick).

BIG PROBLEMS	"OFFICIAL" SOLUTIONS	TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES
Queer and trans people, poor people, people of color, and immigrants have minimal access to quality healthcare	Legalize same-sex marriage to allow people with health benefits from their jobs to share with same-sex partners	Strengthen Medicaid and Medicare; win universal healthcare; fight for transgender health benefits; end deadly medical neglect of people in state custody
Queer and trans people experience violence and often come from families, family members, communities,	Pass hate crimes legislation to increase prison sentences and strengthen local and federal law enforcement; collect statistics on rates of violence against queer and trans people	Build community relationships and infrastructure to support the healing and transformation of people who have been impacted by interpersonal and intergenerational violence; join with movements addressing root causes of queer and trans premature death, including systemic racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia



**DEAN
SPADE**



A WORLD WITHOUT PRISONS

With these zines, we understand that readers may not be entirely convinced that abolition is the right action to take with prisons. Our purpose is to help imagine what a world without prisons could possibly look like and bring it into the public consciousness. As Davis has pointed out, everybody will “inevitably consume prison images, whether they choose to or not, by the simple fact of watching movies or TV” (18). Prisons are so ingrained in media and everyday life that it seems impossible to live in a world where they do not exist in the form they do today. Please continue reading zine two, Replace the Prison, for a more detailed account of what an abolitionist-revision world could look like.

